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ABSTRACT

Ninety-one percent of the 116 students participating in the student teaching programs at the University of Lethbridge (Canada) in 1980 returned questionnaires concerning their perceptions of the behaviors of their student teaching supervisors. Of these supervisors, 43 had participated in workshops on clinical supervision offered by the university, and 62 had not. The questionnaire was administered to the students immediately following their 3-week student teaching practicum. The students rated the trained supervisors higher than the untrained supervisors in all five categories tested: use of the clinical supervision approach, use of freeing rather than binding interpersonal behaviors, use of an indirect rather than a direct supervisory style, emphasis on information rather than opinion in feedback, and provision of solicited rather than unsolicited feedback. The students did not perceive significant differences among trained supervisors who had received their training at different times, when workshop content varied. The questionnaire used is appended. (PGD)

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PRACTICUM STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ASSOCIATES' SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

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Paper presented at CSSE, Guelph, Ontario

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PRACTICUM STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ASSOCIATES' SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

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This third study on clinical supervision addresses the issue from the practicum students' point of view. The two previous studies assessed the effects of the workshop on the teacher associates (TA's) who had participated in it. The Thorlacius study examined the pre and post workshop supervisory behaviors of the participants by analyzing videotaped supervisor-teacher conferences before and after clinical supervision training. The findings of that study indicated statistically significant changes in supervising teachers' pre and post workshop behavior.

Although the Thorlacius study verified that changes in supervisory behaviors became apparent after the workshop, it provided no indication that these changes were carried over into the supervisory conferences which teacher associates conducted with practicum students. Nor was there evidence that students could perceive differences between the behaviors of teacher associates who had completed the workshop and those who had not. In addition, as alluded to

in the Twa paper the workshop content had evolved through a number of stages and there were unanswered questions as to whether these changes in the workshop had made any noticeable difference in teacher associates' terminal supervisory behaviors. Consequently a study was devised to address these concerns.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to address the following questions:

1. Can practicum students perceive differences in the supervisory behaviors of teacher associates who have successfully completed the workshop and those who have not?

2. Can practicum students perceive differences in the supervisory behaviors of teacher associates who completed substantially different versions of the workshop? Stated more specifically, was the addition of certain workshop content perceived to have made a difference in the teacher associates' supervisory behaviors?

3. Did the post workshop teacher associate behaviors as perceived by practicum students remain constant over time or was there a reversion after several years of elapsed time to pre workshop behaviors?

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The overall study design called for an analysis of practicum students' perceptions of the supervisory behaviors of a group of teacher associates who had successfully completed the workshop in its various formats, and of a group of TAs who had had no clinical supervision instruction. The students' perceptions were assessed by means of a questionnaire based on the findings of the Thorlacius study.

The Instrument

The 20-item instrument (see Appendix A) included five categories of items for which differences had been found in the behavior of teacher associates before and after the clinical supervision workshop. The categories consisted of the following:

1. the clinical supervision approach as a whole
2. the interpersonal effect of supervisor behaviors (freeing vs. binding)
3. direct vs. indirect supervisory style
4. information vs. opinion emphasis of supervisor feedback
5. solicited vs. unsolicited supervisor feedback.

The first category, the clinical supervision approach,

was addressed by all 20 items on the questionnaire and encompassed supervisory behaviors consistent with the principles, beliefs, and assumptions underlying clinical supervision. The second category, the interpersonal effect of supervisor behaviors, was addressed by all of the items except #17 and #19 and dealt with supervisor behaviors which are related to the freeing or binding effect they have had on the supervisee. The third category, direct versus indirect supervisor style, was addressed by 10 of the questionnaire items. The last two categories, information versus opinion emphasis of feedback, and solicited versus unsolicited supervisor feedback were addressed by eight and six items respectively.

For each of the five categories half of the items were worded so that an "almost always" choice was a positive response; for the other items "almost always" indicated a negative response toward the concept being measured. Table 1 illustrates the make-up of the instrument and indicates which items relate to each of the categories and in which direction the responses were worded.

TABLE 1

Classification of Items Used in the Questionnaires to Study Categories of Behaviors

	Clinical Supervn. Approach		Inter-Personal Effect		Supervisory Style		Emphasis of Feedback		Initiation of Supervr. Feedback	
#	Pos.	Neg.	Free-ing	Bind-ing	Dir.	Indir.	Info.	Opin.	Sol.	Unsol.
1	X		X							
2	X		X			X				
3		X		X	X					
4		X		X	X			X		
5		X		X						
6	X		X				X		X	
7		X		X				X		
8	X		X			X			X	
9		X		X	X			X		
10	X		X				X			
11		X		X	X		X			X
12	X		X			X	X			
13		X		X	X			X		X
14		X		X						
15	X		X							
16		X		X						
17	X									
18	X		X			X				
19		X								X
20	X		X			X			X	
T.	10	10	9	9	5	5	4	4	3	3

The process by which the instrument was produced and refined included three stages. First, each of the three workshop instructors suggested items which described supervisor behaviors developed by the workshop and found to

be significant in the Thorlacius study. The three contributors then examined the pool of items and collectively agreed upon 22 which were then included in a draft instrument similar in form to the one used in the study.

Stage three of the refinement process was a field test of the 22-item instrument. A group of practicum students completed the instrument and then were asked to interpret what each item meant to them. This exercise produced a number of changes in wording and the rejection of two items, resulting in the final 20-item instrument used in the study.

The Sample

The sample of practicum students employed in the study consisted of all of the education students who were involved in either the second or third practicum during the fall semester, 1980 at The University of Lethbridge. A total of 116 students were enroled in the two practica; 70 in the second practicum, part of Professional Semester I, and 46 in the third practicum which is part of Professional Semester II. From these groups, 63 Professional Semester I students and 42 Professional Semester II students completed the instrument for a response rate of 91 percent.

The sample of teacher associates consisted of those who

had served as supervisors for the 105 students who completed the questionnaire. From the lists of teacher associates with whom the students were placed, the TAs were divided into four categories based on their workshop status. An explanation of the categories and the numbers in each group are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Sample of Teacher Associates Participating in the Study

Group Number	Number in Group	(PS.I	PS.II)	Category
1	62	(40	22)	No workshop; no Clinical Supervision course at The University of Lethbridge
2	5	(1	4)	Clinical Supervision course at The University of Lethbridge prior to Summer Session 1975
3	9	(6	3)	Clinical Supervision workshop during the period Summer Session 1975 to end of Spring Semester 1977
4	29	(16	13)	Clinical Supervision workshop during the period Summer Session 1977 to end of Fall Semester 1980 (STACS instrument used)

Data Collection Procedures

The instrument was administered in a group setting to the Professional Semester I students immediately following their three-week practicum. Some students had withdrawn from the practicum and a few others did not attend the data collection session; therefore only 63 completed questionnaires were collected(90%). For the Professional Semester II group who had just completed their five-week practicum the group data collection session produced 42 completed questionnaires(91%).

In order to separate the instruments into teacher associate categories for analysis, the instruments were color-coded prior to the data collection session. The students were given the appropriate color-coded instrument on the basis of the workshop status of their teacher associate. In order to relieve possible concerns students might have for the anonymity of their responses they were told at the beginning of the data collection session that the color-code on their particular instrument was for the purpose of categorizing the teacher associates into groups. No information was provided about the categories or about the workshop status of their particular teacher associate and no students asked for this information. Neither was any attempt made to determine whether students were aware of the

categorization (workshop vs. no workshop, etc.). Students were directed not to put their names or their teacher associates' names on the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

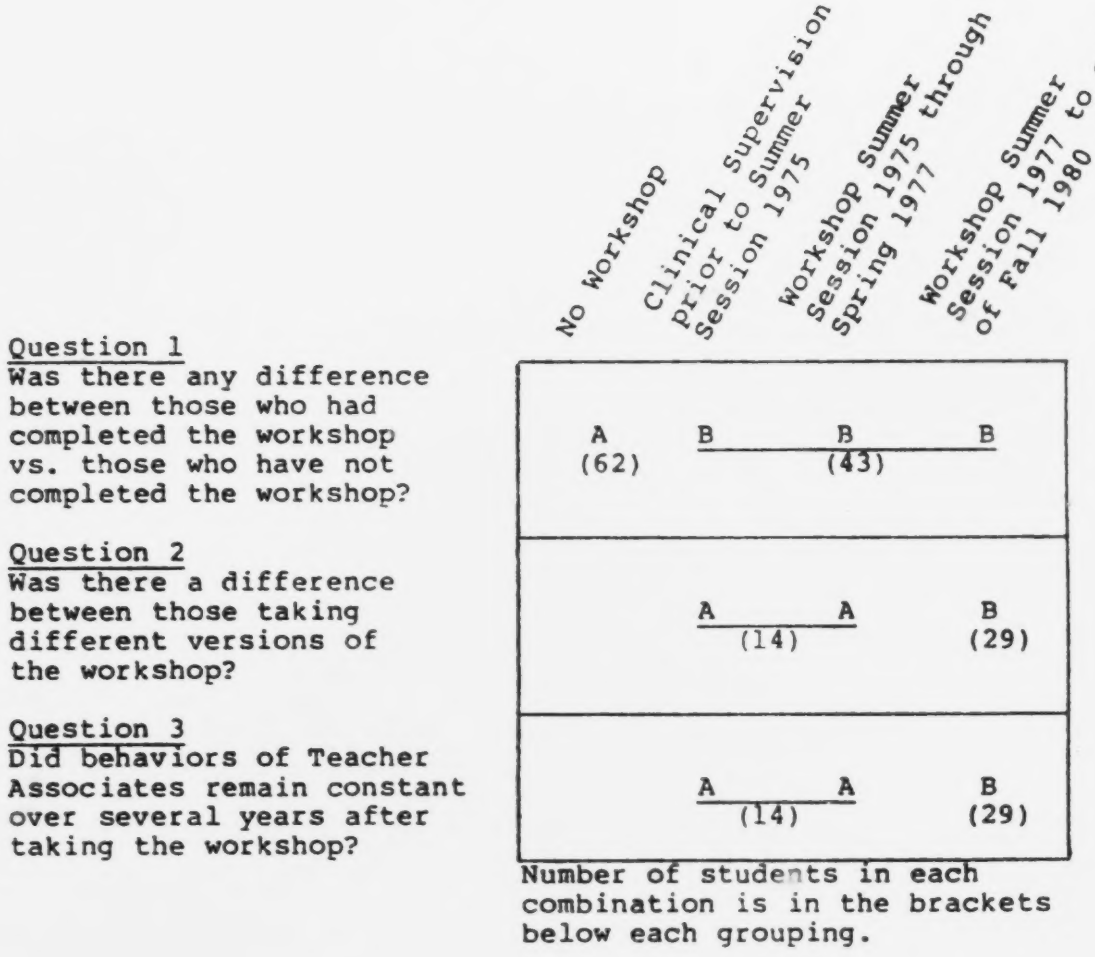
In order to analyze the data, the items on the instrument that were worded negatively were recoded so that a "five" became the most positive response and a "one" the most negative response for every item. Individual students' responses to each item within a particular category were then summed to create a composite score for each student for each category. For the first category, the clinical supervision approach, which was addressed by all 20 items, an individual's composite score could range from a maximum positive score of 100 to a maximum negative score of 20.

For the next category, the interpersonal effect of supervisor behaviors, addressed by 18 questions, individual scores could range from 90 to 18. The possible range for the direct vs. indirect supervisor style category was 50 to 10. Similarly, the range for information vs. opinion emphasis of supervisor feedback was 40 to 8, and for solicited vs. unsolicited supervisor feedback was 30 to 6.

The students' responses were analyzed using a t-test for the significance of the differences between the means

for the various groups of TAs. Further, since the t-test tends to overestimate the significance of differences a median test was also used to test for differences between groups.

The TAs were grouped for analysis purposes as shown in Figure 1. To address the first question of the study Group A consisted of TAs who had had no clinical supervision training; Group B contained all TAs who had at some time taken either a course or workshop in clinical supervision. For questions two and three the groups consisted of those who had taken the workshop prior to the summer of 1977 and those who had taken it since that time up to the fall of 1980.


No Workshop
Clinical Supervision prior to Summer Session 1975
Workshop Summer Session 1975 through Spring 1977
Workshop Summer Session 1977 to end of Fall 1980
Question 1
Was there any difference between those who had completed the workshop vs. those who have not completed the workshop?
Question 2
Was there a difference between those taking different versions of the workshop?
Question 3
Did behaviors of Teacher Associates remain constant over several years after taking the workshop?
A (62)
B B B (43)
A A (14)
B (29)
A A (14)
B (29)
Number of students in each combination is in the brackets below each grouping.

Groupings of TAs for Analysis Purposes

Figure 1

RESULTS

Question 1

The first objective of this study (Question 1) was to determine whether practicum students could perceive differences in supervisor behaviors of TAs who had taken the clinical supervision workshop and those who had not; that is, would TAs with experience in clinical supervision receive more positive responses in each of the five categories than TAs with no clinical supervision training? The results indicate that students did rate more positively the TAs who had taken the clinical supervision workshop. The mean responses for that group (Group B) were higher than for Group A (untrained TAs) for all five categories.

Table 3 illustrates the mean composite score for both groups of TAs for each of the five categories, and the probabilities for the t-test and the median test. In the overall category, the clinical supervision approach, the t-test and the median tests indicated a significant difference between the TAs trained and untrained in clinical supervision; those using the clinical supervision approach received higher ratings. A similar result was apparent for the fifth category - solicited vs. unsolicited supervisor feedback. Students whose TAs had had the clinical

supervision workshop perceived that their supervisor provided proportionately less unsolicited feedback and more solicited feedback about their performance.

The clinical supervision workshop attempts to develop in TAs behaviors that are more "freeing" and style that is more indirect than direct. There appeared to be a trend by those TAs who had completed the workshop toward a more freeing behavior and a more indirect style. The t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups but the median test did not verify the significance of the difference.

Based on the findings of the Thorlacius study and the objectives of the workshop one would have expected students to perceive a significant difference in the category of information vs. opinion emphasis of feedback. This hypothesis was not substantiated by the statistical tests; however, it may be that students were unable to differentiate clearly between information and opinion.

TABLE 3

Differences Between Students' Perceptions of Teacher Associates Who Had Completed the Clinical Supervision Workshop and Those Who Had Not

Category	Mean Rating	t-test probability	Median test probability
1. Clinical Supervision as a whole	A*= 67.74 B = 71.60	.009	.024
2. Interpersonal effect of supervisor behaviors (freeing vs. binding)	A = 61.97 B = 65.56	.013	.110
3. Indirect vs. direct supervisor style	A = 31.35 B = 33.53	.018	.203
4. Information vs. opinion emphasis of supervisor feedback	A = 23.7 B = 24.3	.300	.847
5. Solicited vs. unsolicited supervisor feedback	A = 17.1 B = 18.5	.008	.014

*Group A = TAs with no clinicial supervision training (N=62)
Group B = TAs who had completed workshop (N=43).

Questions 2 and 3

The question of whether students perceived differences in the behavior of TAs who had completed different versions of the workshop was examined using analyses similiar to those used for Question 1. There appeared to be no significant differences perceived between the supervisory behaviors of those who had completed the workshop prior to 1977 and those who had completed it after 1977, at which time the STACS instrument was introduced. Thorlacius was also unable to identify differences in observable supevisory behaviors for these two groups.

The question of whether differences remained constant over time could not be addressed with the available data.

DISCUSSION

The Clinical Supervision workshop appears to have made a significant difference in the supervisory behaviors of teacher associates, as perceived by their student teachers, in their overall approach to supervision, and in the ratio of solicited to unsolicited feedback provided. There was also a tendency for TAs who had taken the workshop toward more "freeing" behaviors and toward a more indirect style. These findings are consistent with the objectives of the workshop and with the findings of the Thorlacius study.

APPENDIX A

Supervisory Behaviors Questionnaire

PRACTICUM STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
of
TEACHER ASSOCIATES SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOURS

In working with you as a practicum student, your teacher associate displayed various behaviours. Please indicate on the five point scale which follows how often your most recent T.A. behaved in the manner described.

The numbers associated with each question (e.g. 5.x) are for the convenience of computer operators only and should not influence your responses in any way.

almost always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
5	4	3	2	1

My teacher associate:

1. Listened to me attentively when I talked.
   (5.x) 5 4 3 2 1

2. Used communication skills such as paraphrasing, clarifying questions and perception checks to insure his/her understanding of what I said before moving on to another subject.
   (6.x) 5 4 3 2 1

3. Made me feel inferior or obligated to carry out his/her wishes.
   (7.x) 5 4 3 2 1

4. Told me specifically how to teach certain things or how to handle certain situations.
   (8.x) 5 4 3 2 1

5. Showed disapproval when I thought, acted or felt differently than he/she did.
   (9.x) 5 4 3 2 1

6. Offered information relevant to my concerns with no obligation that I use the information.
   (10.x) 5 4 3 2 1

7. Agreed emphatically with what I did or said.
   (11.x) 5 4 3 2 1

8. Prior to my teaching a lesson, asked for my input about the kinds of things he/she should observe.
   (12.x) 5 4 3 2 1

9. Provided me with many ideas about what I should or should not do.
   (13.x) 5 4 3 2 1

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almost always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
5	4	3	2	1

10. Provided me mostly with information about what went on in class rather than with opinions about what was good or bad about my teaching.

(14.x) 5 4 3 2 1

11. Provided me with information that he/she thought was important for me to have but which I had not specifically requested.

(15.x) 5 4 3 2 1

12. Tended to refrain from providing me answers, but rather asked me to look at data collected during observation of my lessons and encouraged me to form my own conclusions.

(16.x) 5 4 3 2 1

13. Gave his/her opinion of my teaching whether I asked for it or not.

(17.x) 5 4 3 2 1

14. Made me feel somewhat threatened by the way feedback was given.

(18.x) 5 4 3 2 1

15. Was supportive of me even when feedback was not as positive as I would have liked.

(19.x) 5 4 3 2 1

16. Focused mainly on negative aspects of my teaching.

(20.x) 5 4 3 2 1

17. Took some time each day to sit down and have a conference with me about my lessons.

(21.x) 5 4 3 2 1

18. Solicted my opinion about my teaching after <u>providing me with data</u> indicating what went on in class.

(22.x) 5 4 3 2 1

19. Tried to provide feedback on nearly everything that he/she would think needed attention each time we had a conference.

(23.x) 5 4 3 2 1

20. Asked me what my ideas were whenever I asked for his/her opinion or suggestions.

(24.x) 5 4 3 2 1